

Patrick J. Daley and Beverly A. James. Cultural Politics and the Mass Media: Alaska Native Voices. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004. 235 pp. Cloth, \$35.00.

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Patrick J. Daley and Beverly A. James present a series of five case studies where Alaska Natives have used newspapers, radio, and television media of mass communication as a means to tell their stories. While the authors focus chronologically on selected experiences of the Alaska Natives from the 1880s through 1990s, these examples illustrate the more universal difficulties Indigenous peoples face in preserving culture, place, identity, and way of life in a dominant white culture.

According to the authors, Alaska has the highest percentage of Indigenous peoples in the country at 15.6 percent of the population. The ninety-eight thousand people make up 278 villages of traditional communities and are divided into seven major ethnic groups. Seventy percent live in rural areas and depend on the land.

Mainstream non-Native mass media are shown distorting the Alaska Natives' cultural meaning of place and devaluing Native patterns of living. Alaska Natives struggle to preserve a political economy based on subsistence where land has value as place and also as cultural wealth to safeguard and pass on as their legacy. This Native belief system is in opposition to the dominant white cultural belief that capitalism measures value and the capitalistic value of land lies in economic development of resources. At the same time, Alaska Natives struggle to preserve a culture expressed through narrative and centered on community against the dominant white reverence for competition and for individualism.

These case studies demonstrate that non-Native media outlets support projects that reinforce established federal and state land policies wherein economic development of Alaskan land for preservation and tourism is considered beneficial while ignoring its negative impact on Indigenous culture and ways of living. The Native voice is rarely heard and is guaranteed only when Alaska Natives own or operate local mass media.

The Native-owned newspaper the Alaska Fisherman in the 1920s campaigned against fish traps and tried to protect Native salmon fishing rights against corporate fisheries. Later, in the 1960s, coverage of land issues in the Tundra Times helped mobilize and give voice to a unified Native opposition to the Rampart Dam project that would have flooded villages and destroyed wildlife. Public community radio stations in the 1970s provided the only local programming that was culturally relevant to Indigenous groups. Beginning in the 1970s a struggle for local control of programming on community and state satellite television began to counter the acceleration in the influx of mainstream culture that disrupted the Native sense of community and of place.

The authors use the recurring theme of Gail Valaskakis's (1993) concept of "resistance as cultural persistence" (p. 4) as a unifying context for the case studies. Native-owned

media outlets are shown to disseminate information that affirms the Indigenous culture and way of life. Hence, local Native control of a medium of mass communication allows Native culture to persist and resist dominant media definitions of value and culture. In addition, the authors frequently use James Carey's (1989) "ritual view of communication" and "his definition of communication as culture" (p. 15) as underlying theory.

Spotlighting the experiences and struggles to preserve culture, place, and way of life faced by Alaska Natives contributes to the wider scholarship on Indigenous peoples and the struggle against cultural domination. The text is highly readable, and the qualitative analysis of media content through the lens of issue framing and typification will interest sociologists and scholars studying Native history, intercultural communication, and mass media effects.

The authors, presently associate professors at the University of New Hampshire, became interested in researching these case studies while on faculty at a university in Alaska in the early 1980s. They witnessed some of the struggles firsthand through the local media.

As the authors point out, these findings reinforce sociologist Herbert Gans's (1979) conclusion that mass media practitioners are ethnocentric and reinforce dominant Western values of capitalism and individualism, among others.

The case studies demonstrate that those who have media access can use the media to define an issue seeking a public policy solution in a way that benefits and reinforces the dominant culture. Policy consequences detrimental to other cultures are ignored. In addition, the authors assert that basic news values agreed upon and used by mainstream media to form the news agenda serve to reinforce the dominant culture.

Daley and James suggest Native control of local media outlets would serve to resist dominant culture and allow Native culture to persist. As these case studies demonstrate, Native-controlled media can give voice to Native values and Native culture.

This solution seems ideal but difficult to envision succeeding in a climate of government support for more and more corporate conglomeration of media ownership. We are in a period of fewer and fewer voices monopolizing media access with greater opportunity for the dominant cultural voice to command media coverage.

A more practical avenue for Indigenous voices to be heard through mediated communication might lie with the World Wide Web, the newest medium of mass communication. The authors end with the mass medium of television. It would be more complete for the book to have addressed the possibilities of the World Wide Web as a communication medium that could further the persistence of Indigenous culture.

While it is unlikely that the privately owned, for-profit economic structure of the traditional mass media will change or that government will open its coffers to fund locally controlled public media the authors support, the World Wide Web is a communication medium available immediately to tell the Native story and to reinforce the Native culture. Computer-mediated communication through the World Wide Web could have content under local control that could propagate a local voice.

The Web's absence is especially noticeable in the concluding chapter, where the authors raise the question of communicative possibilities open to Alaska Natives in the twenty-first century. The reader is left wondering whether the authors would view the Web as a mass medium with positive possibilities or one that would further disrupt the Indigenous culture's sense of place.